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African American Police League Records Detail Chicago's Troublesome Past Chicago History Museum Documents Now Accessible to Public

CHICAGO (February 10, 2017) – The Chicago History Museum has opened records for research from the African American Police League (AAPL), an organization that advocated for fair treatment and the advancement of African American police officers in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

“Given continuing concerns about policing in Chicago, especially as it relates to black and brown communities, the papers of the AAPL illuminate how the past matters now,” said Joy Bivins, director of curatorial affairs at the Chicago History Museum. “This collection also shows the possibility and value of police and communities working together to address those concerns.”

Chicago Police Department officer Edward “Buzz” Palmer and group of fellow officers formed the AAPL in response to growing concern over the treatment of African Americans by and within law enforcement in May of 1968. The organization’s goal, according to operational documents in the Museum’s collection, was to “work for high standards of police performances in black communities; to elevate the image of the black policeman to a position of dignity and respect, especially in the black communities; to work for total police reform; and to strive for improved relations between black and white policemen.”

The Museum’s collection includes early AAPL paraphernalia, planning documents and fliers encouraging individuals to report police abuse. Other notable documents from the collection include:

- Selected papers related to the National Black Police Association (NBPA). In late 1972, the AAPL joined several other similar organizations to create NBPA, which supported the efforts of black officers nationwide.
- Documents detailing lawsuits and investigations. The Chicago Police Department opposed the formation of the AAPL and retaliated against its members. This led to a number of lawsuits and investigations, which are documented in the AAPL collection.
- Logbooks, individual forms and other documents that report and track instances of police brutality.
- Documents detailing the AAPL’s establishment of and work with the League to Improve the Community (1970), a non-profit group that focused on community initiatives and crime prevention education.

This collection is now accessible to the public through the Museum’s [Research Center](#), which holds the Museum’s printed material, manuscripts, prints and photographs and more. More information on the Museum’s collection and the history of the AAPL is available in the Museum’s blog post, [The African American Police League](#) and the Research Center’s online finding aid, <http://chsmmedia.org/media/fa/fa/M-A/AAPL-inv.htm>.

The collection was donated to the Chicago History Museum by Renault Robinson and Harold Saffold.

For more information about the Chicago History Museum’s Research Center visit chicagohistory.org/visit/research-center. For more information about the Chicago History Museum’s programs and exhibitions, visit chicagohistory.org or call 312-642-4600.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

The Chicago History Museum, a major museum and research center for Chicago and American history, is located at 1601 N. Clark Street. The Museum can be reached by CTA buses 22, 36, 72, 73, 151, and 156. Parking is conveniently located one block north of the Museum at Clark and LaSalle Streets (enter on Stockton Drive).

Admission includes our audio tours: \$16 adults, \$14 seniors/students, free for children 12 years and younger.

Please call 312-642-4600 or visit us at chicagohistory.org. To learn more follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). The Chicago History Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of the Chicago Park District on behalf of the people of Chicago. The Chicago History Museum is a 2016 winner of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the highest award given to these institutions for their community engagement and having an impact on the lives of individuals, families, and communities.